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AUTHOR Petzy, Vic
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ABSTRACT

This document is designed to assist school personnel in the planning, development, and implementation of vocational assessment approaches for special needs students. The intended audience includes administrators, coordinators, counsellors, or teachers who are interested in designing vocational assessment procedures which maximize the use of existing resources within their school systems. Guidelines place heavy emphasis on integrating assessment procedures into ongoing curriculum. The manual is based on the outcomes of a Massachusetts Department of Education research project administered through the Bureau of Occupational Education. Work in this project was carried out in conjunction with Assabet and Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical Schools (in Marlborough and Upton respectively), and the 18 school systems which they serve. This project will be administered through the Bureau of Special Education during 1980-81, and will involve all, or most of, the Assabet/Blackstone school systems in the adaptation of its approach to local needs. As research evidence accumulates in these practical situations, it is planned that this preliminary manual will be expanded and revised to accommodate new findings. For a better understanding of the vocational assessment process, it is helpful to consult related documents (see note above). (RL)

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VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS INDIVIDUALS PROJECT

PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS MANUAL

FOR FIELD TESTING ONLY

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TM 810 039

A PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS MANUAL

FOR

VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

Submitted to

Dr. Robert A. Stodden
Project Director

By

Dr. Vic Petzy
Project Analyst

October
1980

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A PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS MANUAL

FOR VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

This document is designed to assist school personnel in the planning, development, and implementation of vocational assessment approaches for special needs students. The intended audience includes administrators, coordinators, counsellors, or teachers who are interested in designing vocational assessment procedures which maximize the use of existing resources within their school systems. Therefore, the guidelines which follow place heavy emphasis on integrating assessment procedures into ongoing curriculum.

The manual is based on the outcomes of a Massachusetts Department of Education research project administered through the Bureau of Occupational Education during the past 18 months. Work in this project has been carried out in conjunction with Assabet and Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical Schools (in Marlborough and Upton respectively), and the 18 school systems which they serve. This project, which in the next year (1980-1981), will be administered through the Bureau of Special Education, has . . .

1. Completed a comprehensive review of literature regarding vocational assessment for special needs students (SPED).
2. Constructed a conceptual model for SPED vocational assessment based on implications of previous research for this type of programming in secondary public schools.
3. Initiated a series of developmental steps toward fully operationalizing the conceptual model in two districts in the Assabet/Blackstone region.
4. Formulated a tentative set of criteria for insuring the reliability and validity of the model, through systematic study, in the next two years.
5. Conducted an extensive survey of student and staff populations, career/vocational programs, assessment approaches, occupational trends, and local employers for each of the school districts in the Assabet/Blackstone region.

During the next year, and hopefully beyond, the project intends to involve all, or most of, the Assabet/Blackstone school systems in the adaptation of its approach to local needs. As research evidence accumulates in these practical situations, this manual will continuously be expanded and revised to accommodate new findings.

I THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Observations of current vocational evaluation programs indicate tremendous growth in the development and production of complex commercial work evaluation systems and assessment batteries. Few have clearly conceptualized purposes or considered necessary structural adjustments to address the career development process of the special needs individual.

The vocational assessment model described below has been formulated with the following purposes in mind:

1. To produce developmental information which will assist the special needs student and appropriate service providers to facilitate the career development process.
2. To provide information about the world of work and the special needs individual as to specific work related and work skills representative of work roles within occupational clusters.
3. To maximize the application of both general and specific occupational information to assist the special needs individual's options for successful participation in the world of work.

The model is presented in three components conceptualizing the vocational evaluation of the special needs individual as a developmental, sequential process. Major concern is for the acquisition of information and knowledge by the special needs individual to assist the occupational planning and programming process. Flow through the model components demands cooperation and coordination of assessment activities and application of information over several differing disciplines within the educational setting.

COMPONENT I - READINESS FOR ASSESSMENT

Component I (see chart on page 3) is illustrated within a working format displaying key considerations at an indirect service or administration level. Included are projected student outcomes that should occur as a result of the considerations offered by workshop participants on variables such as setting, process, content, etc.

Model component I is structured to provide activities which will facilitate the individual's occupational and personal awareness, exploration, and understanding, as well as provide general occupational cluster information about the student's work values, interests, and entry level behaviors and skills. Important readiness behaviors and skills include an awareness, exploration and understanding of the role

of work in our society, motivation to work, general behavioral and skill requirements, and self-limitations as well as work roles existing as options.

A key ingredient of the readiness component is student involvement in the program process to the extent that he/she can understand and internalize their own needs and participation within the decision making process. A general product of the readiness component should be a student who is aware of, and has explored and understands his own needs, interests, and present abilities and limitations in relation to occupational options available. Reaching a decision making point to proceed toward more indepth work role exploration and assessment becomes an indication for movement to component II. Prior to movement into component II, many students should have the preliminary information to self screen themselves from further vocational evaluation or inappropriate programs.

COMPONENT II - ASSESSMENT

This component provides indepth work role information for the special needs individual. Traditionally, component II is referred to as work evaluation, defined by Barton (1967) as follows: 1. Comparing a client's behavior on a variety of test items, work tasks, or situations to the client's skills, aptitudes, work habits. 2. Relating attitudes, physical abilities and personal-social traits to a specific group of workers, with a set of standards or criteria defined as effective job performance.

Within the career development context, component II will assist a ready individual to investigate his indepth interest and abilities on work related and work skills specific to actual work roles. Through generalized activities and assessments in component I, an individual may show interest and decide to further explore the work role of a clerk typist. During hands-on indepth work role assessment in component II, the student discovers that spelling is very important in typing, and that sitting is more a part of the work role than he/she had thought during exploratory activities in component I. Exploration and evaluation of another choice would then be in order.

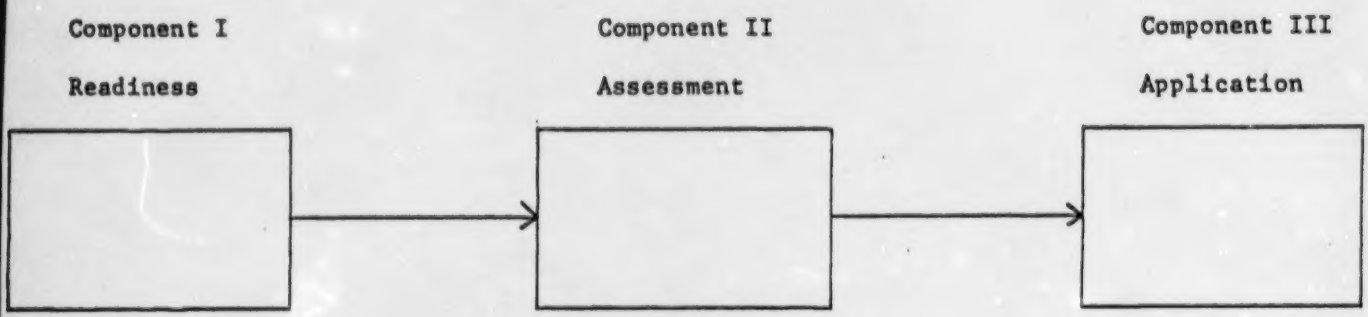
A key content validity and efficiency factor in component II is an analysis of the local employment area, and the program and course content requirements of local secondary and vocational schools. This analysis should provide critical content and process information for the determination of what specific work role tasks are a part of the assessment process. A continual review of this analysis is necessary to insure that assessment process, thus reflecting the needs of training programs and the employment market.*

*This information is required to be on file at a Vocational Regional High School and is available from the regional office of the U.S. Department of Labor, Boston, Mass.

VOCATIONAL EVALUATION OF

SPECIAL NEEDS INDIVIDUALS

(Simplified Format)



Evaluation and awareness, exploration, and understanding of the self and general occupational cluster areas

Indepth work role evaluation of specific work related and work skills

Interpretation, and preparation of data for application

A basic purpose of the indepth assessment stage is to allow the special needs student to explore and collect specific work related and work performance information on representative work roles. Preliminary assessment data from component I would assist choices for indepth evaluation, and assist on collaborating findings in component II. Several considerations are necessary in component II:

(a) The type of assessment procedure used (psychometric tests, work samples, commercial sample systems, situational samples, imbedded observation).

(b) The setting of the assessment activity being as realistic as possible to insure critical situational influences.

(c) Lack of biases (academic, cultural, affective, sex) in the assessment procedure.

(d) The validity and reliability of task observational and rating procedures.

Specifically, component II provides indepth work role information about the world of work and the special needs individual, which can then be interpreted and prepared for application in component III.

COMPONENT III - APPLICATION

Component III will receive a special needs student who is developmentally aware, has explored and understands several occupations on a general cluster level, and has reached a specific work role level. With the individual would be an extensive file of both general and specific work role information (work related and work skills data). This information will have direct implications for the work roles which will serve as evaluation tasks and generalizing power for those work roles representative within the cluster. The information will be analyzed and interpreted within these two frameworks using the Dictionary of Occupational Titles and other guides to expand alternatives. The interpretation of data for decision making purposes would involve the special needs student and significant others related to the placement and programming process.

A prime function of component III is the preparation and formating of evaluation information for use in a variety of administrative and programmatic settings. The evaluation data will contribute valuable information for the core placement, for the vocational instructor, academic teacher, or special education persons in adapting or accommodating instruction, as well as several other persons providing programmatic assistance. The individuals using the prepared evaluation information work in differing disciplines thus requiring specific application and formating of

the data to their needs. It is critical, at this point of the evaluation process, that the data be prepared for use, that assistance be provided in implementing the data, and that evaluation follow-up occur as needs of those applying the data change.

BASIC PRINCIPLES IN OPERATIONALIZING THE MODEL

The following is a list of fundamental considerations and commitments necessary for the implementation of the model:

1. The model is primarily aimed at the collection of assessment information in the middle or junior high school. Student assessment data should be collected starting no later than seventh grade.

2. The model stresses a systematic approach to collecting vocational assessment data from a vast array of possible career/vocational related situations.

   - A systematic approach implies an extensive commitment to ongoing, structured observations of student performance using a variety of methods. Thus far, the project has emphasized teacher observations of students' performance on normal classroom tasks. Teacher observations are then recorded on rating forms designed for interpretation of career/vocational capabilities and interests.
   - This approach requires much servicing of existing staff and a strong commitment to a rational set of procedures for collecting student data.
   - Situations initially involve not only classrooms but one-on-one sessions with guidance counsellors, special learning activities occuring away from the school e.g. site visits to employment settings, shadowing experiences created in relation to jobs held by school system employees e.g. secretaries and custodians, simulated work activities in the high school, vocational school, or in an actual employment setting. Also, simulated experiences on commercial or locally developed work samples set up in the middle or junior high school, and activities occuring as part of special programs administered by other agencies or organizations in the community e.g. YMCA, CETA, church groups.
   - While the project has emphasized seventh grade classroom, to date, all of these situations should be considered, if a comprehensive data base is intended. Indepth assessment, especially, will require data collection in settings that provide a mix of realistic work variables.

3. The implementation of the assessment approach embraced by this manual requires that someone in the school, preferably the Education Team Leader, (ETL) is in control of the process. Data collection initiated in classrooms or other situations must be extrapolated for use in answering specific questions concerning student capabilities and interests. The data must be shared with other team members in a manner which will improve the team's decisions regarding the career/vocational aspects of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

4. Student information collected in the sixth or seventh grade should be viewed as baseline data. As profiles of student capabilities and interests emerge, specific factors may be assessed again and again to monitor vocational related growth and development. Specific instructional objectives for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade should be written based on the assessment information. Long range goals for the high school, vocational school, or other programs in the community, should be formulated early, but reviewed frequently, up to when specific choices are made in the latter half of eighth grade. Decisions made regarding the student's transition from eighth grade to another school or program should be based on the assessment data collected during the middle and junior high years matched against the criteria of entry of the receiving organizations and the career options which realistically will be available to the student in the future.

The guidelines presented in section II are based on the considerations and commitments addressed above. The four phased approach is designed to assist personnel in L.E.A.s with the task of implementing vocational assessment for special needs students. Details regarding how, when, and where vocational assessment for special needs students will be accomplished in specific school settings are a matter for local determination.

II GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Phase I: Administrative Planning and Preparation

The events which precede actual implementation of a comprehensive approach to vocational assessment for special needs students will probably make or break the actual programming. The person* in charge of local implementation must, in a sense, "do his or her homework" regarding:

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM'S NEED FOR SPED VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT,
THE IMPLICATIONS OF LITERATURE IN THE FIELD,
A RATIONALE FOR PURSUING THE PRESENT MODEL,
THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND IN THE COMMUNITY,
AN OPERATIONAL DESIGN WHICH FITS LOCAL NEEDS.
THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS, EMPLOYERS, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.
OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING UPPER LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUPPORT.

While most of the procedural steps suggested in this section may appear "obvious" to the experienced school administrator, the substantive nature of these tasks deserves close scrutiny and constant rethinking. Vocational assessment is not a well established process in most school systems. Vocational assessment for special needs students is virtually nonexistent, especially at the middle and junior high levels. Consequently, project managers must carefully define what they need, why they need it, and how it will be done within the local school system. Efforts to plan precisely one's long and short term objectives, and to communicate clearly with all audiences, will be rewarded later by successful project implementation. An important consideration, for example, at this point, may be whether or not an LEA is in need of all three model components. Only through careful planning can this determination be made.

The School System's Need for Vocational Assessment of Special Needs Students

Is this project really necessary? Will your special needs students benefit from the systematic collection of vocational assessment data at the middle or

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* For the purposes of this manual, this individual is referred to as the special education director. While the SPED director will certainly not perform all of the required tasks, that person will surely have at least a minimum role in overseeing the process. What is important here is that the person responsible for these tasks has a clear understanding of the steps required to operationalize the model.

junior high level?

The project manager should prepare a concise 1-2 page statement detailing precisely the problems he or she perceives in the school system regarding this issue.

The statement should identify:

1. The students who are affected and the difficulties anticipated with their long term employment prospects, their vocational school choices, or their short term instructional needs.
2. Legal mandates of Chapter 766 and P1 94-142 regarding valid and reliable procedures for assessment and the inclusion of vocational considerations in the IEP.
3. Expressed concerns of parents and teachers of special needs students.
4. Selection and retention needs of the area vocational school.

One or two short case studies might be included in, or referenced by, the statement to provide a realistic ring. The needs statement should be prepared for use in every situation which requires a response to why the project should be undertaken, or (later) why it is being undertaken.

The Implications of Literature in the Field

What models for special needs vocational assessment have been developed and applied in other school systems nationally and regionally? What specific methods have been used to collect assessment data for this population? What principles can be drawn from previous work and applied to the local school system?

Knowledge of the field of special needs vocational assessment will be a powerful ally for SPED administrators who are attempting to pursuade others of the merits of this type of programming. The present project has amassed a large collection of materials which will greatly expedite the task of reviewing existing literature. This data base - referred to as the "Information Storage and Retrieval System" - located at the Northborough office consists of:

1. Research studies, papers, and journal articles.
2. Annotated listings of vocational assessment instruments from paper and pencil tests to simulated work samples.
3. Descriptions of models developed and applied in public schools and rehabilitation agencies regionally and nationally.
4. Information on commercial houses that produce vocational assessment materials.

The local SPED Director should:

1. Allocate an adequate amount of time for reviewing the data base described above.
2. Obtain source documents that are of particular relevance to the local school system.
3. Order related journals e.g. Exceptional Children, Journal of Rehabilitation, Career Education for Exceptional Children.
4. Develop a list of appropriate books and establish a local library on vocational assessment of special needs students.
5. Prepare a packet of introductory materials which may be used for staff preparation.

A Rationale for Pursuing the Present Model

Why is the state's model appropriate for special needs assessment in general, and our needs specifically?

If the SPED Director is intent on following the approach to assessment stressed in this manual, he or she should prepare a 1-2 page explanation of the merits of the model for the L.E.A. (Local Education Agency). Reference to the present project should be embellished by discussion of:

1. The widely based endorsement of the project by two state education bureaus, two regional vocational schools, and eighteen school districts.
2. The comprehensiveness of the research and development phase culminating with the conceptual model in the first year of the project.
3. Ongoing developmental outcomes which have involved L.E.A. personnel and are creating positive changes in the project schools during phases II and III.
4. The potential long term cost effectiveness of using existing school resources in implementing this model.
5. The education value of integrating assessment procedures into existing curriculum, thereby insuring a familiar environment in which to collect critical career/vocational information for special needs students.
6. The appropriateness of this approach in meeting the legal, social, and educational issues addressed in the needs statement discussed in Section A.

The Resources Available Within the School System and in the Surrounding Community

What are the existing resources available to the L.E.A.? What specific materials or procedures already in use may be embraced to expedite the implementation of the model?

The concept of utilizing local resources in integrating vocational assessment into ongoing curricula will be meaningful only if the SPED Director can apply this approach to the local setting. Knowledge of local resources may be acquired by conducting a comprehensive survey of all aspects of the curriculum. Person to person dialogue between the SPED Director and administrators, teachers, and counsellors, in the middle or junior high school and in the high school, will not only yield the necessary information, but will provide staff members with an initial orientation of the planned assessment approach. This dialogue will raise numerous questions concerning project aims and activities, and alleviate many of the communication problems that will inevitably arise once the project is off the ground. The surveying process should be used to collect detailed information within the following categories:

1. School system personnel - numbers of administrators, teachers, counsellors, regular and SPED, and their specific roles.
2. Students - total number of regular and SPED students, by grade, by 766 classification.
3. Career/vocational programming currently offered to regular and special needs students.
4. Audiovisual equipment available in the school system.
5. Literature, films, slides and filmstrips, which are related to career/vocational education.
6. Current role of vocational assessment in the team evaluation process.
7. Active parent and community groups concerned with special needs.
8. Special needs programs in other schools or agencies in the community.
9. Predominant employment settings and occupational trends for the area.
10. Other school system factors, such as transportation needs between schools, physical barriers, and scheduling patterns.

This data base will be of immediate value when developing local operational models.

An Operational Design Which Fits Local Needs

Just how is this project going to work? What students? At what grade? With which staff members? For how long, and where?

Beyond the idea stage of project development, the SPED Director must be able

to specify how the assessment model will accually work in the local system. A well thought out operational design is absolutely vital to obtaining and maintaining support for the project. This design should include:

1. Students who will be served (e.g. all special needs students or only 1, 2, 3's), and when (e.g. grade levels, data collection three or four times per year) general indepth assessment will occur.
2. Specific situations in which assessment services will be integrated with existing resources - regular classrooms, special programs, etc.
3. Procedures for articulating the model with the team evaluation process - i.e. how assessment data will be formulated and used by the team in a particular school.
4. Inservice needs - number of teachers, from which teaching areas, plans for expanding preparation, types of compensation (stipend, released time, etc.).
5. Timetables for phasing in teacher preparation, tryouts of instrumentation, and field testing.
6. Purposes of, and ways in which, tryouts and field testing will be implemented and reviewed.
7. Administration personnel and consultant needs.
8. Funding alternatives, including local budget allocations, and state and federal monies e.g. PL 94-142 and PL 94-482.

The Involvement of Parents, Employers, and Community Leaders

Who else in the community is favorable toward the project? How do parents and employers feel about the project?

No school system can function in isolation from the influences of its surrounding community. In attempting to develop alternative approaches to special needs assessment, the involvement of parents, employers, and community leaders is essential. One way to provide access for these individuals is through the formation of an advisory team, or task force, with representation from various sectors of the community, as well as school personnel, who have shown interest in the SPED assessment issue.

In the planning stages of the project, the advisory team may occasionally be convened for the purpose of brainstorming issues and soliciting new ideas. Formal support from this group may be enlisted when seeking upper level administrative support. When the project is implemented, the advisory team should be retained for periodic review of project processes and products, as well as for assistance in pursuing wider community and school system support.

Obtaining and Maintaining Upper Level Administrative and School Committee Support

What is the school committee's position? How about the superintendent? Have school system policies been adopted ready? How do you go about obtaining the backing of the school committee and the superintendent? How do you maintain that support?

In business, if the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) or Board of Trustees call for a new project, the organization will almost certainly gear up and make every effort to meet the stated goals. The same idea holds for school systems. While some projects do get moving, with nothing more than the endorsement of a principal or group of teachers, unless the superintendent and the school committee give their blessing, most will have at best only a short term existence.

In developing strategies for obtaining upper level support, the following guidelines should be considered:

1. Fit the approach to the administrative structure of the local system. In a large system, with a director of special education, a director of occupational education, and perhaps even a director of curriculum, attempts should be made to keep everyone informed and to stimulate discussion of the potential project. Implications for each director's area of supervision should be spelled out completely. In a smaller district, the superintendent may be directly accessible. In this case, the number of potential decision makers may be smaller, but the form of communication will be just as important and should be tailored to fit the individual's style in dealing with alternative proposals.
2. Use informal as well as formal lines of communication. Scheduled meetings and concept papers aren't the only means through which the project can be conveyed. Use the opportunities to talk over coffee, at lunch, or at school system functions to say a few things about the new idea that is going to be proposed and its benefits to special needs students in the district.
3. In regard to formal lines of communication, plan to systematically provide upper level administrators materials, such as the needs statement, relevant literature, and the overall project design, as they are developed. Ask for time on the agenda at regular staff meetings, and schedule individual meetings for the purpose of introducing the new concepts and collecting peer responses.
4. Involve upper level administrators by consciously incorporating some of their ideas into the overall project design. This approach will give them ownership and increase the possibilities of formal acceptance later.
5. Prepare several alternative plans for implementing the assessment project and simplify major presentations by using visuals or overlays.
6. Anticipate superintendent and school committee questions on major policy issues such as:

- How much will it cost? Prepare at least a qualitative analysis of the cost benefits of the project and the alternative funding sources. (Local budgets, state and federal monies via PL 94-142 and Pl 94-482).
- How will teachers be inserviced? Outline possibilities such as stipends, released time with substitutes, hourly rates. Reference school system precedents in this regard.
- How long will the project take? Set out dates for reaching specific project objectives. Be prepared to expand, or scale down, estimated timelines.
- Who will be in charge? Clearly define administrative roles in the project and specify responsibilities, especially for reporting.

After the project is initiated, set up procedures for:

1. Meeting with upper level administrators to provide updates on the project.
2. Sending sample products to upper level administrators and committee members.
3. Filing periodic written reports on project progress.

With an adequate amount of time and energy, the planning and preparation period for the assessment project will set the stage for the substantive developmental steps (phases I, II, III, and IV). These involve staff preparation, adoption and adaptation of instrumentation, tryouts of individual sub-components of the model in the local context, and field testing under normal school conditions over at least a full year.

Phase II: Local Development

No comprehensive approach to vocational assessment can be implemented in a few easy steps. New ideas and new methods should be introduced into the school system gradually to give staff an opportunity to learn what works for which students. The developmental phase is designed for this purpose.

Four Developmental Themes

During the developmental phase, four developmental themes will evolve: general assessment, indepth assessment, the team evaluation process, and expansion of pre-vocational instruction.

1. The expansion of pre-vocational instruction is related to general assessment and should be developed in tandem with those procedures in order to provide the readiness experiences necessary for indepth assessment.
2. General assessment involves the systematic collection of vocational related information in the seventh grade and the first half of the eighth. Teachers will be assessing students in regular classroom situations, primarily.
3. Indepth assessment will involve the collection of detailed assessment information in actual job related situations. These situations will be determined by the interests of students, information collected in general assessment, and the vocational programs available to students in a given community.
4. The team evaluation process includes all policies and procedures by which the assessment data will be used in the development and maintenance of student I.E.P.s.

Development Theme 1 derives from Component I of the conceptual model described in Section I. Developmental Themes 2 and 3 derive from Component II of the model, and Developmental Theme 4 derives from Component III.

As indicated in the introduction to phase 1, not all L.E.A.s will have a need to address each of these components. A critical decision, based on phase 1 efforts, will be to determine the "comprehensiveness" which will be necessary in a specific school system. For example, schools with adequate pre-vocational instruction for special needs students would benefit more by having more attention paid to Themes 2-4.

Limitations of the Present Manual

Because of the need to develop the basic instrumentation for collecting

assessment data in school situations, the present project has concentrated on the general assessment theme. The remaining three have been planned for development in the next few months, but no direct tryouts have been initiated.

What follows is based on "general assessment" developments to date, in the present project. However, since L.E.A.s will not be developing their own instrumentation, all four themes should be simultaneously manageable when implementing the entire model. The guidelines presented below are based on that assumption, and therefore include tasks which are designed to bring about the gradual implementation of all four themes in unison.

Recruitment of Staff

The SPED Director should:

1. Establish a team of 7th and 8th grade teachers, counsellors and administrators in the target middle or junior high school. Depending upon the size of the school, the team should consist of between five and ten people. Methods of selection should comply with local procedures and may run the gamut from being completely voluntary to direct assignment by the principal. Every effort should be made to choose staff members who share the system's concern for special needs vocational assessment and are committed to making substantial contributions to it.
2. Formulate the team to meet the following additional criteria:
    a. Represent as many classroom situations as possible, ranging from English to Industrial Arts to Music.
    b. Include the educational team leader for one or more grades.
    c. Include an administrator, principal, or assistant.
    d. Include additional specialists who may be available.
3. Offer compensation to the team consistent with normal L.E.A. procedures including:
    a. direct stipends
    b. hourly wages
    c. course credits
    d. step increments
    e. released time

The Inservice Schedule

Staff preparation is necessary to insure proper implementation of vocational assessment for special needs students. The SPED Director should:

1. Decide on a timetable for training staff members and conducting tryouts of various parts of the model. Consideration should be made for how the timelines for the tryout phase will articulate with program expansion and the field test phases discussed later. The present project has determined that tryouts should probably be held after September and before May to

insure that the school dynamics are appropriate for specific activities.

2. Choose specific dates to provide an adequate amount of time to cover the range of activities prescribed for the inservice period (the inservice package is discussed below).
   Options for scheduling inservice include: summer workshops, released time, after-school sessions. This decision should be related both to compensation and the actual training needs required. In regard to the latter, the present project found that all day sessions during the summer were very effective in preparing teams for the tryout phase.

3. Plan ongoing review sessions to be held during and after the tryout phase. These meetings will be necessary to provide continuous analysis of each tryout leading to final decisions on what will be adopted for further use.

A model two-year timetable is presented in the diagram below:

FIRST YEAR

	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
Inservice	Training & Preparation Local developments				Ongoing meetings during tryouts			Post tryout meetings decisions on expansion				
Tryouts					Testing of various project parts							
Expansion					New staff training & preparation				Program expansion to other staff			
									Tryouts			
Field Test					SECOND YEAR							

Conducting the Inservice

The purpose of the inservice sessions, before, after, or during tryouts or field testing of the program, is to provide school personnel with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to develop and implement the four program components on the local level.

The Project Manager should:

1. Acquire examples of the four program components designed in the present project. General assessment modules, indepth assessment approaches,

exemplary pre-vocational activities, and detailed policies and procedures for team evaluation processes will be available.

2. Collaborate with the team to determine to what extent these components will be adopted outright by the L.E.A., or adapted to its individual needs.
3. Follow closely the guidelines provided by the inservice package accompaning this manual. This document contains a complete set of details regarding:
   a. Knowledges, skills, and attitudes which individual school personnel must acquire.
   b. Instructional objectives covering the entire inservice process from the inception of inservice to the end of the field test.
   c. Activities which may be used in the inservice process.
   d. Resources that may be introduced.
   e. Teaching strategies and evaluation methods that may be employed.

The Tryout Phase

Although each of the four program components may be developed at a different rate, each one should be tried out on a limited basis before a full scaled field test is implemented. Each component may be treated independently. Thus, at one point in the school year, teachers may try out the instrumentation for general assessment. At another point in time, the same teachers may try out some pre-vocational activities involving visits to occupational settings. At still another point in time, a team evaluation meeting may become the focus of attention regarding the formatting of general assessment data. When possible, the interrelationships between components should be checked out. For example, data from an indepth assessment for a specific student may be formatted and used immediately in a team evaluation meeting for the same individual.

In short, the school becomes a laboratory in which informal experiments are tried out in vivo. Based on these results, individual assessment items, teaching strategies, counselling questions, or team evaluation procedures may be accepted, revised, or rejected before field testing is done.

In order to insure a reasonably successful tryout phase, the SPED Director should:

a. Select small groups of students, even individuals at times, who represent the intended target population. Every attempt should be made to choose students with whom a maximum number of team members will be working.
b. Designate specific time periods in which various activities will occur.
c. Arrange pre-and post-activity planning and review sessions.
d. Develop formal feedback mechanisms involving team members, students, and other participants.

e. Determine specific criteria by which tryouts will be judged, and target dates when final decisions will be made regarding future approaches.

f. Arrange for a number of sessions in which staff members, who will be involved in an expansion of the program, will begin their orientation.

Having developed and tried out various parts of the model for local use, plans must be made to insure a field test of the entire model operation under realistic conditions. Phase III addresses the necessary expansion.

Phase III: Program Expansion

Prior to a full field test of the assessment model, (see Phase IV), efforts must be made to expand each of the four developmental themes to encompass a full complement of activities, staff, resources, policies, and procedures. Changes and innovations, during this period of model implementation, should reflect the findings of the tryout phase. The goal of the expansion phase is to fully operationalize the model with as many "kinks" removed as possible. The time frame for this phase will depend upon how much progress has been made on each of the themes. Assuming the tryout phase has been implemented in the first half of the year, the program expansion phase could be implemented during the latter part of the year.

Some typical considerations for the expansion of program themes are discussed below:

A. Staff Training - Teacher representation should cover all critical areas of the curriculum. All counsellors working with SPED students must also be brought into the assessment model. The systematic preparation of all additional staff members must be planned and carried out. Additional tryouts should be carried out to insure that the methodology employed in any of the program themes are fully understood.

B. Resources - New Materials will have to be purchased or developed for wider implementation of the model. During the expansion period, books and equipment from different parts of the curriculum should be utilized before commercial purchases are made. Situations for conducting indepth assessment may be expanded, as well as opportunities for direct student observations of work sites.

C. Students - Special needs students, with all types of learning difficulties, should be involved at this time to make sure the model can accomodate the full range of disabilities. Additional modifications in assessment counselling or instructional materials should be made, based on these findings.

D. Policies and Procedures - For each school, formal details should be spelled out concerning the policies and procedures for collecting assessment information, channeling the data to the evaluation team, using the data in developing IEPs, introducing instructional and counselling activities, involving parents, communicating with high schools, vocational schools, or community agencies, and documenting critical events.

E. Evaluation - Methods for fully evaluating each of the four model themes should be tried out and finalized for the field test. Having alternative ways of collecting and judging program data may prove to be critical during the field test phase.

F. Establishment of the Local Model - At the end of the program expansion phase, the project manager should carefully review and evaluate every feature which has been developed and tried out at that point. Features

which will be retained should be incorporated into an overall operation framework, describing the local model planned for the field test.

Having worked out most of the implementation problems, the model should be ready for full scale field testing under realistic circumstances.

Phase IV: The Field Test

The purpose of the field test is to determine how the model works when fully operationalized, within the normal school setting. This phase, which should last at least one full school year, must be designed to answer questions such as:

- How does the model work when applied to all special needs students?
- What problems arise in articulating each of the four themes with each other?
- What effect do other programs in the school have on the model in terms of time, staff, and resource utilization?
- How valid and reliable is the instrumentation used to collect assessment data for specific special needs students?
- What additional staff training needs are necessary?
- What gains have students made in regard to vocational knowledge and attitudes?
- Which instructional strategies and resources work best for which students?
- What are the reactions of parents, teachers, and administrators to certain features of the model?

Many more questions could be added to this list for each developmental theme - general assessment, indepth assessment, team evaluation process, and prevocational instruction.

Prior to implementing the field test, the SPED Director should:

1. Determine what specific questions will be answered for each developmental theme.
2. Decide how data for each question will be collected - interviews, questionnaires, direct observation.
3. Set up a system for collecting all necessary information at appropriate times.
4. Develop time lines for evaluating the overall model.

Even if the field test lasts for only one year, it should be viewed as an opportunity to establish preliminary data for judging the effectiveness of the vocational assessment model for special needs students within the local district. The long term evaluation of the model will ultimately be based on whether or not the curriculum interventions made at the middle school level will enhance the employability of special needs students.

Concluding Remarks

The present manual is far from complete, and so it has been entitled "A Preliminary Operations Manual". When the research on the assessment model is completed, much more detail may be incorporated into this document. At this writing, four phases for local implementation have been identified for the school systems participating in the current project.

(a) Administration Planning and Development

(b) Initial Tryouts

(c) Program Expansion

(d) The Field Test

Criteria which will be considered in each phase have been identified in this manual and specific guidelines have been set out where possible. As will be true in the future, materials and approaches already researched are referenced, and opportunities for local initiative in a number of areas have been left open.